Filled With Doubts About Nixon

'Average American' Reacts

By CHARLES CHAMBERLAIN

ROLLING MEADOWS, Ill. (AP) — The man touted by public television as a "typical American" two years ago says that his mind is filled with doubts about the President but that he "prays to God that the public will believe what Richard Nixon has to say."

"I hesitate to believe him anymore, even if he says he is telling the truth, and I think a lot of people won't," said Richard Johnson, 44, a bespectacled, smallish man who attends choir practice in the Trinity Lutheran Church in Rolling Meadows and works as a credit manager of a steel company.

He is the father of four children. He and his wife, who is secretary of the church board, make a combined yearly salary $15,000.

The National Public Affairs Center for Television in Washington, D. C., named him and his family in 1972 as "Typical Middle American" and he said he has been trying to live it down ever since.

Johnson, who was given a week-long trip with Democrat George McGovern during the 1972 presidential election campaign, said for the first time in his life he switched to the Republican ballot and voted for Nixon "because I didn't like either candidate, but I thought less of McGovern and what he stood for than Nixon."

"Boy, did I have an awakening about Nixon," Johnson said in an interview in his modest home. "Nixon was a shoo-in for president—all this Watergate and spying and bugging stuff was so unnecessary for his election.

Johnson said the incidents of the last week and before — the resignation of Vice President Spiro Agnew, the firing of special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox, the decision of Nixon to surrender the tapes — was a "fiasco that brought to a peak how Nixon influenced everyone around him as a man who was supposed to run a tight ship."

He continued:

"The last week has been a tragedy — leaving a sour taste in the mouths of millions — they now doubt him — his image has been damaged — even if he tells the truth, I hope to God people will believe that he is. I don't want to see him impeached, it would be too much of a black mark on American history ... Let's hope there are capable advisors around him and he listens to them."

"Why did he fire Cox? Was Cox on to something more? Did he have the goods on him? Are there things on the tapes, which he withheld so long, that could incriminate him in affairs outside the realm of Watergate?" said Johnson. "I don't think what's actually on those tapes he at last will surrender will be known by the public.

" ... The whole thing is a smelly ball of wax. His attorney now says 'My man always will obey the law' ... Ha, big deal." continued Johnson. "If the man really wanted to go along with the Watergate probe in the first place, I don't see how he ever could withhold the tapes and therefore his help."

Johnson added:

"I think his decision to turn them over came primarily as a move to get back into the good graces of the public — not because he was fearful of impeachment.

"The feeling persists, however, that he has been doing something not in the open — I hate to say on the sly — and I think he was really hit hard by the wave of public resentment of his actions in the last week.

"Nixon now is a concerned man ... And I don't think people have the faith in him anymore. I know I've lost my faith in him and I am sorry I voted for him. The only person I would vote for now, if he runs, is Ted Kennedy."

Johnson said he was surprised when television centered on his family as "typical American" two years ago.

"But I went along with it and got a lot of exposure," he said. "Now everytime some crisis comes up my telephone is ringing from people wanting my ideas.

"I've also gotten a lot a hate mail as well as some good mail.

"It's not too easy being tabbed an average middle American. All I can do is say how I feel."

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Here is the article Bloopto saw in the Elgin paper
Bob